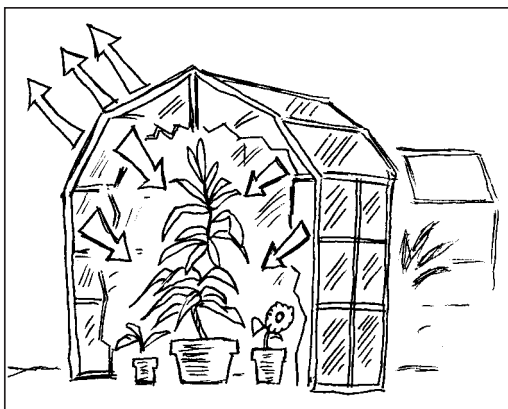# Check Out the Greenhouse Effect

Have you ever seen a greenhouse? Most greenhouses look like a small glass house. Greenhouses are used to grow plants, especially in the winter. Greenhouses work by trapping heat from the sun. The glass panels of the greenhouse let light in but keep heat from escaping. This keeps the plants warm enough to live in the winter.
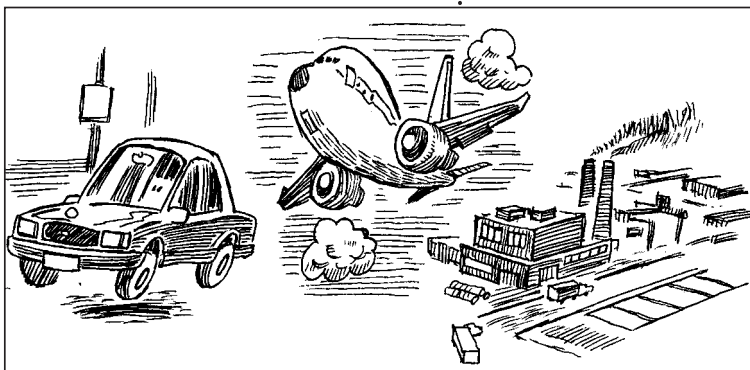
The earth's atmosphere (AT mohs feer) is all around us. It is the air that we breathe. The atmosphere works sort of like a greenhouse, too. Here's how:

The sun makes the earth warm. Without the sun, people would not be able to live here. But too much heat from the sun is not good, either. The earth sends some heat back into space, and that helps keep the earth from getting too hot. Most of the earth's heat is trapped by the atmosphere. Like the glass roof of a greenhouse, the atmosphere keeps most of the heat from going back into space.

The fact that the atmosphere traps heat is called the "greenhouse effect." It's similar to what happens in a greenhouse.

The greenhouse effect is important. Without the greenhouse effect, the earth would not be warm enough for humans to live. But if the greenhouse effect becomes stronger, it could make the earth warmer than usual. Even a little extra warming may cause problems for humans, plants, and animals.

We need energy to do things like drive a car, fly a plane, or make things in factories. But we need to use energy wisely if we want to help slow global warming.

Greenhouse Gases

The atmosphere contains substances called *gases*. Some of these gases trap heat from the sun. Because those gases cause the greenhouse effect, they are called *greenhouse gases*.

Some greenhouse gases are produced by human activities. We make greenhouse gases by using fuels such as gasoline. Fuel is important. We need fuel to drive cars, fly planes, and heat our homes. But when we use fuel, gases go into the air and add to the effect of the greenhouse.

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